

RULES

Why beauty inspired by the past is trending in the present.

RETRO



MODEL ADWOA ABOAH (TOP) REFERENCES SINGER SADE'S SIGNATURE BEAUTY LOOK FROM 1986 AT THE 2022 BAFTAS.

On a video call earlier this year, Erin Parsons, Maybelline's global makeup artist and Gigi Hadid's go-to beauty guru, is showing me her massive collection of vintage beauty products. "I am literally spending my life savings on this collection; it's so out of hand. I have probably over 2,000 pieces,"

says Parsons, gesturing at powder compacts promoting Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential campaign, Maybelline's first mascara from 1917, and Revlon lipsticks from the 1960s designed to look like dolls in fur coats.

The popularity of vintage clothing is well-documented, but vintage beauty is fast amassing a fan club of its own. In addition to enthusiastic product collectors like Parsons, there are dozens of nostalgic, beauty-focused Instagram accounts, such as @discontinuedmakeup, an ode to '80s- and '90s-era cosmetics. TikTok videos with the hashtag #vintagemakeup have logged more than 425 million views thus far. And there are a slew of young Hollywood stars who've made retro looks cool: *Euphoria*'s Alexa Demie collaborated with makeup artist Sam Visser to create her 1930s-style skinny brows; pop star and Versace muse Dua Lipa channeled Donatella herself at the 2022 Grammys; and model Kaia Gerber drew inspiration from Bianca Jagger on the red carpet last September. Vintage beauty also frequently shows up on fashion runways, with throwback references appearing at the fall 2022 shows, including glossy lips at Victor Glemaud, squared-off nails at Christian Cowan, and bright blue eye shadow at Christian Siriano.

So what's driving this affinity for all things vintage? For starters, the packaging is often extraordinary—like intricately adorned refillable compacts from the 1950s and '60s

made from real brass—or whimsical, like '90s-era lip gloss rings. But there may be a deeper emotional element at play. A June 2020 article in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* suggested that nostalgia helps fight feelings of loneliness, since remembrance is typically a collective experience. As we exit a pandemic and enter an uncertain future, scrolling through an Instagram account devoted to images of '80s supermodels—or hunting for vintage makeup online—may serve as an emotional salve.

Claire Mazur, coauthor of *Work Wife*, tracked down a box of 50 Bonne Bell Lip Lites in Shoutin' Sugar—her teen obsession. Chelsea Fairless, who cohosts the fashion podcast *Every Outfit*, has eBay alerts set for Love Cosmetics, “a brand with the most fabulous space-age packaging” (much like Ariana Grande’s **R.E.M. Beauty**), as well as '90s-era Hard Candy nail polish, the line whose Sky blue lacquer was reportedly worn by actress Alicia Silverstone for her *Clueless* press tour. “Hard Candy polish was the ultimate status symbol when I was a tween, and I cannot shake my obsession,” Fairless says. Her current white whale: Hard Candy’s limited-edition Candy Man collection, which was marketed toward guys and boasted shade names like Testosterone (silvery gray) and Oedipus (forest green).

It’s not just individuals looking backward for inspiration. A crop of new beauty brands are also borrowing from the past. TooD, a clean makeup line created by Shari Siadat, a fan and former reader of now-defunct *CosmoGirl*, enlisted the magazine’s founder and editor-in-chief, Atoosa Rubenstein (also the namesake of the nostalgic Instagram fan account @thankyouatoosa, which pays homage to Y2K-era teen magazines), to collaborate on the line’s spring 2022 marketing campaign. “We used the bright palette, script fonts, and busy-ness of *CosmoGirl*, combined with TooD’s more modern content,” Rubenstein says. “Regrettably, we had cover lines like *5 Ways to Get Him to Notice You*, but TooD’s creative imagery includes trans models and armpit hair with glitter—it’s a Gen Z riff on the '90s.”

Similarly, cosmetics historian Gabriela Hernandez created Bésame Cosmetics to emulate vintage products, but with modern formulas. Her best-selling **Bésame Black Cake Mascara** (above right) was inspired by a product from the 1920s, but hers is made of vegetable waxes, rather than the original’s coal tar and soap. Cake mascaras (which come in a compact and require the addition of water before applying) were mostly phased out in the U.S. in the 1960s and '70s when wand mascaras arrived on the scene, but Hernandez says they’re worth revisiting because they’re conveniently multipurpose: In addition to playing up lashes, they can be used to fill in eyebrows, rim the eyes as an eyeliner, or even camouflage grays.

Parsons, who finds much of her vintage makeup via Ruby Lane, Etsy, Istdibs, auctions, or antique stores, concedes that “formulas are so much better now.” But it was through experimenting with old products that she discovered a vintage formula she’s eager to reinvent. “It’s [Revlon] Bachelor’s Carnation, a red lipstick once worn by Marilyn Monroe,” she says. “Now I just have to find the ingredient list and re-create it myself.” —MARISA MELTZER



FROM LEFT: BÉSAME BLACK CAKE MASCARA, \$28, BESAMECOSMETICS.COM; R.E.M. BEAUTY ON YOUR COLLAR MATTE CLASSIC LIPSTICK, \$19, REMBEAUTY.COM.



FROM TOP: MILEY CYRUS DITCHED HER BILLY RAY CYRUS-INSPIRED MULLET FOR A DEBBIE HARRY DYE JOB; KAIA GERBER WORE COIFFED BIANCA JAGGER-LIKE WAVES INSPIRED BY A 1981 RED-CARPET APPEARANCE; POP STAR DUA LIPA, WHO OPENED THE VERSACE SPRING 2022 SHOW, CHANNELLED THE ICONIC BLEACHED-BLONDE DESIGNER AT THE 2022 GRAMMYS.

ARONAH, TRISTAN FEWINGS/GETTY IMAGES; LIPSTICK SWIPE, JAY MUCKLE/STUDIO D.; SAREE, PETER JORDAN/WANLY; CYRUS, ROBERT KAMAU/GETTY IMAGES; GERBER, ARTURO HOLMES/GETTY IMAGES; MASCARA SWIPE, JEFFREY WESTBROOK/STUDIO D.; LIPA, DAVID FISHER/SHUTTERSTOCK; REMAINING IMAGES: COURTESY OF THE BRANDS.